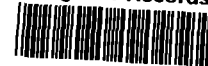


**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION REPORT**

I. HEADING

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



143097

Date: October 20, 2000
Subject: Nicor Mercury Sites, Chicago Suburbs, Multiple Counties, Illinois
From: Brad Stimple, U.S. EPA On-Scene Coordinator, Region 5, RS3

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POLREP: # 3

II. BACKGROUND

CERCLIS ID No: ILN000508064
Response Authority: CERCLA
Start Date: 07/24/00
Completion Date:

SITE ID # B5P9
NPL Status: NA
Action Memo Status: NA

III. SITE DESCRIPTION

A. Incident Category: Residential, Nicor Service Center and Industrial/Institutional
Mercury Spills - PRP Oversight

Site Location: Various Residential and Industrial Addresses Throughout the Nicor
Service Area Located Primarily in Northern Illinois.

1. Site Description:

U.S. EPA along with various state and federal (ATSDR) agencies continue to oversee the Nicor mercury spill cleanup project. Cleanup of residential and industrial settings along with Nicor owned

facilities is closely monitored by the agencies involved. U.S. EPA has been working very closely with the Office of the Illinois Attorney General (OAG) as a task force member. The task force meets weekly with Nicor to discuss the details and reporting requirements of the entire cleanup. The task force has guided Nicor in the production of various step by step protocols for the appropriate screening and cleanup of residential properties discovered to have mercury contamination due to improper regulator removals.

The total number of homes to be visually inspected with follow up instrumentation screening using a mercury vapor analyzer (MVA) has grown to approximately 255,000. The universe has increased as Nicor continues to refine their data base search of those homes which may have had or still have a mercury regulator in the home. Homes identified as always having a mercury regulator outside of the home are not included. Nicor estimates that approx. one third of the homes visually screened will be eliminated from the list as a result of the visual evaluation of equipment found and configuration of the gas service in the home. Nicor has committed to performing a visual inspection of all of the homes by 11/15/00. All Nicor homes where a mercury regulator was removed dating back to 1990, were to be evaluated by 10/13/00. MVA screening of all homes is to be completed by 12/30/00. Nicor has also committed to performing priority inspections (within 24-hours) of those residents who have notified Nicor that either a pregnant woman or children five years old or younger reside in the home.

As of 10/14/00, 611 homes have been confirmed as requiring decontamination and cleanup. This roughly equates to approx. 1.5% of the homes initially inspected required cleanup. Of the 611 homes, cleanup and final confirmation, by means of final air sample collection and lab analysis (hopcalite), has been completed at 89. An additional 182 homes have been cleaned and await final confirmation. The balance of homes are either scheduled to be cleaned or cleanup is in progress. The Illinois Department of Public Health has been tasked with sending out a clearance letter to the resident which includes the analytical results.

Nicor has recently retained IT Corporation (IT), a national environmental consulting firm, to provide overall project management of the residential cleanup program. This includes all residential activities from initial visual and instrument screening to final sampling and approval clearance. All subcontractors working on these activities have now been transferred under contract to IT. Approx. 15 cleanup contractors and industrial hygiene firms comprising 50, 5-man cleanup crews are currently being utilized. Nicor has recently submitted a residential screening and remediation work plan which includes all of the protocols, health related info. and public outreach info. required by the task force. As requested by Nicor, IT has generated and submitted an overall Quality Assurance (QA) plan to be reviewed and approved by the task force. Based on statistical methodology, the plan includes the necessity to perform QA inspections of many of the tasks which are being performed. To control verification errors, IT will initiate a certain number of QA inspections of the visual and MVA screening programs to identify errors and ensure accuracy.

As agreed upon by the task force, IEPA and IDPH will be retaining an independent environmental consulting firm to provide similar QA inspections and evaluations of both residential and industrial cleanups. IEPA will direct the industrial QA program and IDPH will direct the residential. U.S. EPA will provide technical assistance and support to this effort. This program is tentatively scheduled to begin in the next couple weeks.

IEPA has been heading up the oversight of mercury spill cleanup activities at industrial/institutional facilities where manometers or other mercury filled pressure measuring devices may be housed and Nicor owned service centers or transmission facilities where similar devices may be found. The remaining cleanup work to be performed at seven Nicor service centers is to commence soon upon final work plan approval. U.S. EPA has been providing support to IEPA as necessary.

NOTE: U.S. EPA continues oversight of Nicor cleanup work being performed at the four privately owned scrap yard locations. Information concerning this work is being documented by separate POLREPS. The first POLREP was dated 10/6/00 and has been distributed.

2. Description of threat:

The presence of metallic mercury and associated vapor release discovered in the many homes and businesses discussed above, poses a serious threat to human health and the environment through direct contact, ingestion, and inhalation. Inhalation represents the most serious route of exposure. Mercury vapor screening results discovered by U.S. EPA/START and by the cleanup contractor at homes first discovered indicated levels well above guideline levels established by ATSDR for residential settings.

IV. RESPONSE INFORMATION

A. Situation

1. Current Situation

Nicor has assumed responsibility for the mercury spills and has retained cleanup contractors to perform the removal work. U.S. EPA has assumed a monitoring and oversight role to ensure that the homes are properly decontaminated and that air monitoring activities are properly pursued.

2. Removal Activities to Date

No active removal work is being performed by U.S. EPA thus far. U.S. EPA and START contractor representatives continue to perform on-site monitoring activities as necessary.

3. Enforcement

SEE INITIAL POLREP.

B. Planned Removal Actions

1. U.S. EPA along with ATSDR and the various state agencies will continue to monitor and oversee the progress of the residential cleanup as part of the OAG task force.
2. U.S. EPA will continue to screen homes as necessary to verify Nicor results and respond to dissatisfied home owners who have contacted the agency.

3. U.S. EPA will continue to provide technical support to the agencies involved as necessary..

C. Key Issues

No key issues to discuss at this time.

V. COSTS

TO BE DETERMINED.

VI. DISPOSITION OF WASTES

Any recovered mercury and all contaminated items generated as part of the residential home cleanup effort is being properly disposed by cleanup contractors retained by Nicor under U.S. EPA and IEPA supervision.